1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

285 Near this section lives a Negro basketmaker * who claims that he is carrying on the tradition of his ancestors. He [462] stated that for generations the men of his family had engaged in wood carving, basket making, and various phases [322] of weaving, and that the craft had been passed on from [286] father to son.[70] He himself only makes baskets. White oak and bulrushes are selected as the material from which to [824] make the baskets and they are stitched with scrub palmetto. Those made of bulrushes are of the coil type (Plate IIc). A A kind of thin rope is made from this grass which is then twisted around and around and sewn tightly together. The baskets made from white oak are plaited.[70] The types of baskets include hampers, flat clothes baskets, farm and shopping baskets, and the popular "fanner" which the Negro venders balance gracefully on their heads as they walk about the city, displaying a colorful array of merchandise.

322 Some years ago an unusual discovery was made near this district when a boy noticed a carved spoon ** lying on top of 412 a rubbish heap. This spoon (Plate IIa), A which has been 532 carefully preserved, is made of teak, and, judging from the dark polished surface of the wood and its general appearance, it might well be more than a century old. The bowl is shallow and about two by three inches and the whole length about seven inches. The most unusual feature of the spoon is the carved figure of the disproportionate little man forming the handle. Of particular interest are the flat cranium, the exaggerated ears, the gash-like mouth, the queerly shaped nose, the long dangling arms, and the short tapering legs which appear to be far too small for the rest of the body.[41b]

794 Near the Old Fort is the Peace Mission of Father Divine.† 346 This comparatively new religious sect has an estimated mem-

* *John Haynes, 933 Wheaton Street.*

** *Property of Edward A. Sieg, 128 West Jones Street.*

† *Though the meetings of Father Divine are common to many parts of the United States, especially in the North, where white worshippers form a sizable proportion of the followers of Father Divine, this description ac-*

A. [See Categories 285 & 412, plate following p. xxxii-B--Analysis]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

subtropical location, one can find men, women, and children sitting in kitchens smelling the welcome aroma of "hoppin John and bone" cooking in a pot or just sitting, smoking pipes (men and women smoke pipes on the Sea Islands), and watching the torrential rain beat against the windowpanes. The best stories I collected on the Sea Islands and in Africa, however, were ones I heard at night in front of the fireplaces when all the daily tasks were completed, supper had been served, the children had been bathed, and everyone was relaxed, content, and gazing into the open fire. The fire had a hypnotic effect, and one's imagination could easily see forms amid the light and shadows of the flames while one listened to the teller unravel his tale.

During the cold season on the Sea Islands (*harmattan* in Africa), yams (or *ji*, the Igbo name for a kind of potato) are often covered with the hot coals of the fire, baked, and offered as refreshments to the entertainer, who never seems to fail to make his tale more pleasing as a result. Gin, homemade brews, and other warming drinks are often passed around if there is a good group of tellers and listeners. In Igbo, Yoruba, and Ibebio villages fresh palm wine, chilled or served at room temperature, and cola nuts are always welcome refreshments during storytelling times.

Though everyone is potentially capable of telling a tale, I soon learned that not everyone can tell a *good* tale. Sea Island informants with whom I spent much time over several years often attempted to tell stories only in an effort to help me along with my work. Others felt a strong need to compensate me for coming such a long way to talk to them or to hear their stories. Thus they made efforts to tell tales even when the occasion was not conducive for a telling to begin. In this situation the teller was often tense, rushed, and unprepared to do his best; the tale would often be confused, lacking in plot, and generally uninteresting. But it is well known among the islanders and the Nigerians who the good storytellers are, and after some time I was directed to those tellers well known for their performances of the oral traditions and gifted in the oral technique. In the words of one of the islanders, "some people de gift for lie." The world *lie* has more than one denotation on the Sea Islands: it not only means that one is not telling the truth; it is also a term associated with any kind of fictional tale told primarily for entertainment.

There are certain cultural taboos associated with Sea Island storytelling. More men than women tell tales. Men are expected to be

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina .

skilled speakers as well as dancers and singers, while women are expected to be responders, doing the clapping and rhetorical backup. Though some women do tell tales, they most often do so in the privacy of their homes when the men are away. Likewise, the Igbo, Yoruba, and Ibebio women seldom tell tales in the company of men, although alone, or in the company of other women and children, some of the Sea Island and African women are avid storytellers.

On occasions when a storytelling contest was held at the community store during my stays on the islands, many women came to hear the stories, though few of them actually told tales themselves. Miss Myma, the elderly Sea Island lady with whom I resided and who accompanied me to most preplanned telling sessions, always told the first tale, but more in an effort to sanction and add approval to the occasion than as a traditional practice. Several women with whom I had spent time over a seven-year period came to the storytelling contest but bluntly refused to tell any stories. After the session ended and the men were awarded the prizes by the island judges, these women approached me and asked that I come by their homes the following day. I did so and was told many tales, as well as given many folk remedies, cures, and songs. One lady, highly respected in the community, permitted me to hold two storytelling contests at her home. However, she refused to come outside to listen to the tales because the audience was comprised primarily of men. I learned that women are not expected to participate in activities that are considered primarily male-oriented activities. Within the Sea Islands as well as within certain African communities, only women who are elderly or held in fairly high social esteem can participate in such activities without fear of censure.

Most of the tales told by women and elderly men are told during the daylight hours just after lunch when they take a break from the daily chores just to "catch some breeze" or "sit in the cool." One elderly gentleman, nearly one hundred years old now, often entertained me for hours with tales, historical events, and reminiscences before he resumed his afternoon plowing with his favorite mule. This man is particularly interesting because he firmly believes that a man should live apart from his wife and family. Until his wife's death very recently, she lived in a fairly large, modern dwelling with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren while he lived in his shanty located behind the main house and near the other homes within his yard area. His wife prepared his meals and brought them to him at

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

staple cotton, a different type of picking, which had to be done from only slightly opened bolls, and a painstaking preparation for the staple market in the ginning process. Men were usually responsible for seed extraction of Sea Island cotton. Jenkins Mikell of the Peters Point Plantation, Edisto Island, gave an account of this activity on his father's estate:

> The operation was long, tedious and fatiguing. It was done on gins operated by foot, a crude plantation, or domestic device for getting out the seed from the lint—one man to a gin. He would stand on his left leg and work a crank-like arrangement, somewhat like a crank that drives a sewing machine, first with his right foot, then when he got tired . . . he would hop on his right foot and work his gin with his left foot—never stopping his gin as he changed. . . . As each man has thirty pounds of lint cotton to gin out for his day's work, he has no time to loaf.[41]

Sea Island slave women also performed arduous, monotonous, and fatiguing work on the plantations. The crop was harvested from late September through December, a cold, damp part of the year on the coast. Women and boys were considered the best pickers, though all field hands would be ordered out at first harvest. As soon as enough cotton was gathered, ginning began which took many men away from the fields. Women pickers worked rapidly yet carefully, so not to bruise the delicate fibers for this would affect the grade. Sea Island planter William Elliott maintained that "the greatest care is used by them to separate from the cotton, all dried leaves or other substances that may impair or discolour." While "prime, young and strong" women engaged in this activity, the elderly, "less sturdy" women and those near their time of childbirth worked in the gin house. They thrashed or "whipped" seed cotton to further remove loose sand or dirt then passed it on to "assorters." This group of women stood before long tables and divided the lint according to color and fineness. From there men received the "assorted" seed cotton for seed extraction. Once this was accomplished, women "moters" inspected and divided the cotton once again, removing fibers stained by the black cotton seed crushed by the gin. Finally, before packing, the cotton was subjected to one final inspection at the "mote table."[42]

The whole process created a tenseness which everyone experienced. A driving momentum was kept up, but quality work was insisted upon since that was the key to the lint's value. Activities were coordinated so

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Rev. G. C. Brown

THOSE WERE ROUGH DAYS

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My wife and I've been here since '36. No pastor had lived here the last forty years before we came. And of course by not living with the people, they couldn't know their need and their desire. They wanted somebody to come and live with the people—that's why we came.

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The first thing I found here was extreme poverty. That was during the days of the Depression, and there was no work except the WPA project. That white schoolhouse out there was built as a WPA project. The men on the farms were working for seven cents an hour. Oh yeah, seven cents. And the women, five cents.

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The men plowed; the women did all the farm work. That time they didn't have planters to plant the potatoes. They cut the potatoes, dropped them in the field, and the men did all the work with the plows. That give pretty good farm employment. You had a number of men running plows, the women go along and drop the potatoes, and that give them a good day's work—several days' work in springtime. That give them employment during the planting season.

And the cabbage plant out by hand. Nowadays some have a planter. Some children worked then, but they didn't have too many children that time. There hadn't been so much marrying and going on.

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(262)
(243)

Those were rough days. Food was short, scarce, didn't have much. The most they ate those days, they ate rice, grits and canned tomatoes. They bought their tomatoes at the store. They were cheap then. They bought the grits. Some made their own grits. They had a few mill. And they used to raise their own rice. There were a lot of rice farms around. They had a way of cleaning it and milling it.

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Most of 'em were poor. Had no income. Very little income. They lived out of the creek. In the summertime they had crabs and shrimp, and in the wintertime had oysters. You could buy right at your door about three times a week, undressed shrimp—five cents a plate. In the wintertime we buy

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F.D.97

sta on d fiel til d lite nea goin. Billie, ma un I tel ya dey no timb fer d chilln to b disobedient."

Today's children are not reared in the farm habit. Few of the parents have had long to exposure to the patterns in which the elders were reared. It is consequently the differences in exposure and work habits which underly changes in the generational views of Gullah parents. The significance of differences in the discipline view of the two generations illustrates not only that the "on ma dae" reflections of parent and elder parent differ, but it is also a measure of the direction of change. Grandparents were the most frequent to respondent "ma paren use beetn everytime," while parents and children said <u>often</u> and <u>sometimes</u> more frequently. As a matter of fact, twice as many parents cited they were punished <u>sometime</u> than did elders. The direction of change between the generations is clearly that in each subsequent generation parents are less apt or as quick to punish the child.

Still another point to be considered in looking at the relative tolerance of the female parent is that of role differences. Males consistently cited fighting as one of the chief reasons for being disciplined. On the other hand not getting the chores done was a prime reason for disciplining girls. This is explained in that males had few household responsibilities and were not disciplined for

861 "undone" house chores while girls were. Upkeep of the
562 house was clearly the female role. When you also consider
[462] that females more frequently reported that they were disci-
plined on an overytime ratio, role differences are again
indicated.

It must be clearly understood that the difference in part may be attributable to the greater likelihood that the social behavior of female children would be committed in or close to the house, than would be the case for males. This suggests that the female asocial acts could be more readily noticed. In part, parents and elders in particular may just be more lient with male children. Certainly the "man chill" attitude is prevalent here. Since females outnumber males, a premium is placed on male children. Among island
[178] parents, tolerant attitudes toward males may also be a unique cultural reflection of an African habit.

184 In summation, there were few areas in which signifi-
86 cant differences exist across the islands. Islanders are quite agreed in their discipline attitudes. Much of the preceding discussion must be seen in the persceptive of broader level homogenity across the five islands. The most
[178] noticeable implication is that the isolation of the Sea
Islands has to a large extent protected the cultural cohe-
[177] siveness of the island community. Notions of the broad scale influence of the mainland elements on island

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

her husband's pails which they took to the field with them for dinner.[26]

If the wife were frugal, she might have a portion of the weekly rations left when Monday came around again, and these she might either feed to her pigs and chickens or sell to the overseer or to an island storekeeper. The money was hers to use for the good of the family, but it was hers, nevertheless. It was the woman of the family who, with the aid of her children, worked most of the family patch, and it was usually the woman who marketed the produce and pocketed the money received in exchange.

The planters helped to make of woman the dominant sex in the family life of the slave by the position which they gave her in the plantation regime. The cabin was hers. The children, too, were listed on the plantation records as belonging to the mother. Seldom was the father's name indicated. Thus a person might go through life known as Binah's Toby or Moll's July. Likewise the mother had the privilege of naming the new baby unless she graciously yielded the right to its father or to a friend or relative. In this right she often exercised a singular taste, for one child might be called Jupiter, another Quash, a third January, and a fourth Hard Times.

Miss Towne was amused at the jealousy of their "natural rights" which the men on St. Helena Island began to show after that region had come under the jurisdiction of the Federal Army during the Civil War. "Political freedom they are rather shy of, and ignorant of," she

[26] Some planters, as it has already been pointed out, delegated plantation cooks to prepare the noon meal for the field hands so that they might have something hot to eat at this time. Some planters also allowed an hour's rest at nine o'clock for breakfast.